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New Survey Shows California Parents Want Summer Academic and Enrichment Activities but Obstacles Prevent Enrollment in Programs

Nearly 6 in 10 parents in California (59 percent) either did not enroll their child in a summer program at all or did so for less than half the summer

Sacramento, Calif. According to a new survey by Public Agenda, six out of ten (59%) California parents say they either did not enroll at least one school aged child in any summer programs at all in 2009, or did so for less than half of the summer. Moreover, parents who sent their child to an enriching and academic program believe it helped better prepare their child for school.

That's just one of the many new realities facing California parents based on a new Public Agenda survey conducted in both English and Spanish of more than 1,200 California parents with children between the ages of 5 and 15.

Notably, there is a gap between what parents want for their children during the summer and the activities in which their children were able to participate. A majority of parents say that it is important for their children to partake in a variety of activities during the summer, not only spending time with family, but also participating in enriching activities, including academics. Yet, 3 in 10 parents did not enroll their children in any summer program at all and more than half (54%) of them cited lack of affordable programs as a reason.

The lack of affordable summer enrichment programs is especially problematic among low-income, rural, African-American and Latino parents. While 65% of parents in general say they would like to know more about quality, affordable summer program options, 79% of low-income, 74% of African-American and 71% of Latino parents agree that they would be interested in receiving more information regarding local summer programs in their communities.

Summer programs are especially important because 87% of parents who did send their children to summer programs that included academic and enrichment activities agreed that the programs

helped prepare their children for the school year, with 45% “strongly agreeing.” Yet Jon Rochkind, Director of Research at Public Agenda noted, “Our study indicated that African-American and Latino families, along with low-income and parents living in rural areas, believe they are less likely to have access to quality summer programs. And, Latino parents, even more than white parents, were concerned that their children’s summer programs include some academics so that their kids don’t backslide over summer.”

Lois Salisbury, Director of the Children, Families and Communities program at the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, which funded the poll, said, “Overall, this study shows that California’s parents want what research tells us children need. These findings will inform the Packard Foundation’s recent focus on summer enrichment as a natural extension of California’s unique school based after-school programs.”

The survey findings will be released today at the California Legislative Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment hearing, taking place in the Capitol in Sacramento. Participants will include the Chair of the Task Force, Senator Mark DeSaulnier of California’s Seventh State Senate District; Jon Rochkind of Public Agenda and Lois Salisbury of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The State Legislative Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment was created in 2008 after the passing of Assembly Concurrent Resolution 134, authored by California Senator Mark DeSaulnier and sponsored by the Partnership for Children and Youth. The Task Force was created to address the issue of building awareness about the gap in structured summer learning opportunities for low-income children and is currently involved in producing recommendations for the Governor and the Legislature regarding the state’s role in addressing the education, enrichment and health needs of California children in the summer.

For additional information, including more details surrounding the survey results, please see the attached fact sheet or visit <http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/Calif-summer-survey>.

About the Survey:

The Public Agenda survey was conducted in September and October 2009 in both English and Spanish and included 1,204 California parents. Focus groups were conducted prior to the survey with parents in Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland and San Jose. The research was funded by a grant from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

About Public Agenda:

For over 30 years, Public Agenda has been providing unbiased and unparalleled research that bridges the gap between American leaders and what the public really thinks about issues ranging from education to foreign policy to immigration to religion and civility in American life. Nonpartisan and nonprofit, Public Agenda was founded by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in 1975. Public Agenda's two-fold mission is to help American leaders better understand the public's point of view and help citizens know more about critical policy issues so they can make thoughtful, informed decisions. Visit their website at www.publicagenda.org.

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